Synopsis

A central theme in Third World Political ecology since its initiation has been the political and ecological oppression of the grassroots actors by more powerful actors. Ecology and development issues are major concerns in the ecological politics and movements (Raymond L.Bryant and Sinead Bailey, 1997). The nature and livelihood of Third World's rural poor has changed profoundly. Environmental change is not a neutral process amenable to technical management. Rather it has political sources, conditions and ramifications that impinge on existing socio-economic inequalities and political processes. The costs and benefits associated with environmental change are for the most part distributed among actors unequally. The environment in the Third World is a livelihood issue and hence any change to that environment will inevitably alter the ability of different actors to earn a livelihood. A differentiated social and economic impact of environmental change also has political implications in terms of the altered challenge of actors in relation to others. Thus environmental change signifies wealth creation for some and impoverishment for others (Ramachandra Guha, 2000). The link between the livelihood of poor grassroots actors and environmental change may be seen in both urban and rural areas in the Third World. However, it is perhaps in rural areas that the links between environmental change and grassroots livelihood concerns are most evident. For grassroots actors living in these areas, survival in the short term is their primary concern and for this they depend largely on the resources of the surrounding area. The issues of ecology and livelihood are very complex and therefore require an empirical context to situate (Dharam, Ghai, (ed.) (1994).

A reproduction of economic development based on commercialization of resource use for commodity production in the newly independent countries created the internal colonies. Here development got reduced to a continuation of the process of colonisation; it became an extension of the projects of wealth creation in modern western patriarchy's economic vision, which was based on the exploitation and degradation of nature, and on the exploitation and erosion of indigenous cultures. This development could not but bring about destruction of nature and subjugated cultures. The displacement of indigenous people from productive activity by the expansion of development was rooted largely in the manner in which development projects appropriated or destroyed the natural resource base for the production of sustenance and survival. It destroyed tribal's productivity by removing land, water and forests from their control and also through the ecological destruction of soil, water and vegetation systems by which nature's productivity and renewability were impaired.
Most development practices have furthered, and still further the transformation of relatively autonomous and self-governing communities, which over the years have carefully developed an intimate relationship with their lands, into dependent communities easier to subordinate to transnational markets and nation-states. In reality, the indigenous community’s livelihoods are socio-cultural in the broadest sense rather than narrowly strategic in character. As a successor to imperialism and colonialism, development has extended the reach of those local world-views and values far beyond the place in which they took shape. In the market economy, the organising principle for natural resource use is the maximisation of profits and capital accumulation. Nature as well as human needs are managed through market mechanisms. Demands for natural resources are restricted to those demands registering on the market; the ideology of development is to a large extent based on a vision of bringing all natural resources into the market economy for commodity production. When these resources are already being used by nature to maintain her production of renewable resources and by adivasis for sustenance and livelihood, their diversion to the market economy generates a scarcity condition for ecological stability and creates new forms of poverty for the tribals. Here the tribal people continually find themselves subordinated within the nation-state and international system. This implies that, for the most part, their struggle to pursue their livelihood is dominated by the central idea of development.

With the arrival of globalization, the changes taking place at the bottom tiers of nations have received little attention. Socially, there is a growing alienation and fragmentation and sharpening polarization between classes and communities take place because the social base of the polity has been narrowed instead of being progressively widened (Jed Greer & Kenny Bruno, 1996). The interactions of different social groups (rich and poor) are dynamic and complex. An unequal distribution of environmental costs and benefits reinforces or reduces existing social and economic inequalities. This assumption reiterates the point that environmental and developmental concerns are inseparable and that any change to that environment will inevitably alter the ability of different actors to earn a livelihood. The differentiated social and economic impact of environmental change also has political implications in terms of the altered power of actors in relation to other actors. The grassroots actors have more often been at the loosing end of environmental struggles with their lot in a politicised environment which is largely characterised by marginality and vulnerability. What emerges from these discussions is a strong dependency of poor adivasis on the environment on the one hand, and their growing social and ecological marginalization on the other hand.

Kerala was systematically incorporated into the world economy from the late nineteenth century. During the colonial regime, its economy was only specialized in the export of raw materials and agriculture. After independence, ‘the developmental state’ attempted to plan national economic development to diversify
narrowly based export economies. The contributory factors included misconceived agricultural modernization projects, liberalization policies in agriculture and the increasing population growth and commoditization in rural areas which manifested in the problems of environmental and social reproduction. The effects of the crisis are still felt on rural households especially those of adivasis who depend entirely on agriculture for their survival. Here the invisibility of adivasis is partly geographical and partly political. Moreover the adivasis of Kerala could never figure out as a united political bloc also (Jose, Murikkan, 2003).

Wayanad, the district of Kerala where the highest concentration of adivasis is found is rife with stories about unemployment, poverty, diseases, starvation deaths, loss of livelihoods etc (Bijoy, C.R., 1999& 2003). As a particular and illustrative case we are analyzing the Human-Nature relationships of a tribal community in Wayanad. In this work we consider ecology in which natural resources are predominantly used, managed and conserved by community based actors. Despite the limited scope for generalization, an in-depth analysis of a particular case would illuminate the nature of possible linkages between ecology, development and livelihood.

**Objectives**

1. To examine the adivasi issue in Kerala and particularly in Wayanad in the framework of State, Development and Environmental degradation.
2. To analyze the livelihood security of the adivasis and how the Paniyas attempt to survive in this situation.
3. To analyze the mobility and social interface of Paniyas.
4. To analyze the political empowerment of Paniyas.

**Hypotheses**

1. The livelihood of Paniyas is highly insecure as a result of environmental degradation.
2. The State involvement through development schemes has not helped in improving the predicament of Paniyas.
3. Through various measures the settler community has socially and economically marginalized the Paniyas.
4. The Paniyas' livelihood is now in a highly insecure situation.
Plan of Work

The outline of the thesis can be summarized as follows. The introductory part introduces the study with its objectives, problems, scope and methodology. Following the introduction the first chapter deals with theoretical developments. The primary aim of this chapter is to introduce to the field of Third World political ecology and development in terms of a general evaluation of the political role of different actors in human-environmental interactions in the Third World. Second chapter deals with a description of the adivasi question in India. The theme of the third chapter is to unveil the adivasi livelihood in the context of the changing terrains in which political and social development processes took place in Kerala. It critically analyses the adivasi issue with special reference to Kerala's development approach. Chapter four discusses the socio-economic issues of adivasis in Wayanad. The fifth chapter gives a detailed discussion of Paniyas in Wayanad. The sixth and seventh chapters analyse the livelihood assets possessed by the Paniyas. It starts with an analysis of different influential factors affecting their livelihoods. The sixth chapter discusses in detail the financial, natural, physical and social assets possessed by this community. The seventh chapter examines the human assets, the health and education of the community and the problems with their disempowerment. The last chapter is the conclusion. The scope of the study is almost exclusively with social structure and development in relation to capitalism and hence concentrate primarily on the livelihood issues of rural poor. The issues of gender could be incorporated into the framework. But it is not addressed here.